

The Speckled Hatchback

Using birds to discuss and explore the natural world

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Monday, March 7, 2016

Post #58 - Colombia introduction and happenings!

Greetings from Colombia! I arrived in Bogotá late Saturday night, and, after a quick sleep, my group of 11 boarded our flight to Riohacha on the Caribbean Coast. This small beach city is the last significant outpost as one moves northeast towards to the Guajira peninsula which Colombia shares with neighboring Venezuela. It is also right now the eastern end of the Northern Colombia Birding Trail, a joint venture between several US agencies, the National Audubon Society included, and a number of Colombian entities designed to boost birding and ecotourism in the region. The hope is that birding will bring much needed revenue to that particular part of the country while giving local people a valuable stake in the preservation of the various habitats that span the trail's length. To this end, much time and effort has been spent training local bird guides in the last year. There is now a wide knowledge base to accompany the many birding opportunities that the region holds. I am actually part of a press tour that is designed to spotlight these precise opportunities. With representatives from the America Birding Association, National Geographic Society, National Public Radio, The National Audubon Society, and a host of Colombian media outlets, I am quite honored to be a part of the fun.

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Biking for Birds



Dorian Anderson Photography



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Post #61 - I love it when a plan comes together!

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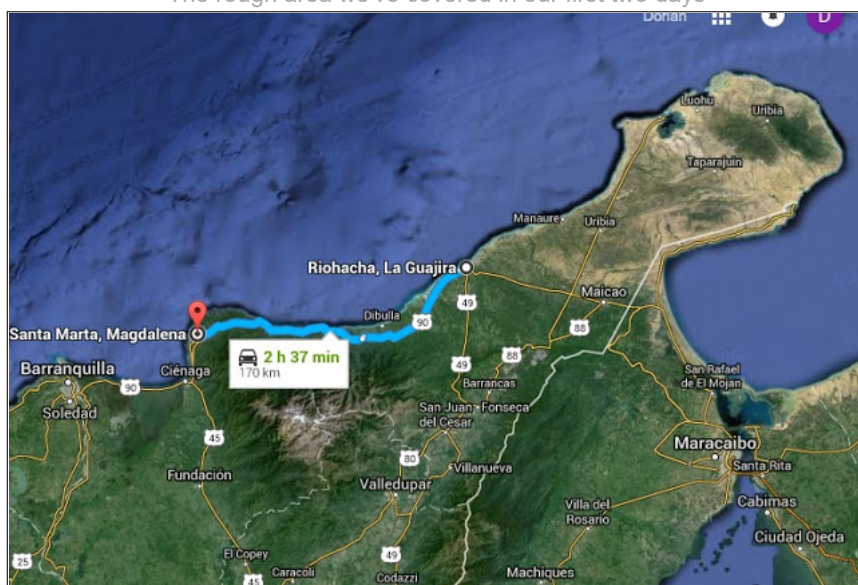
Post #59 - Colombia, part 2

Post #58 - Colombia introduction and happenings!

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The rough area we've covered in our first two days



Without getting into too much detail right now, let me just say that I have been thoroughly impressed with what I have seen in just the first two days I have here been. Both birds and local guides are plentiful, and there seems to be a real ground swell within the local communities we have visited. Just today, our group knocked into at least 4 other groups, each of which was being taken around by one of the program's guides. It is already looking as though connecting communities through birding will provide them a valuable economic base while coincidentally providing the incentive to conserve the resources on which that base is built. I will say that this part of Colombia is decidedly third world. Cinder block dwellings are commonplace and resources are understandably limited. That being said the residents have been very friendly and accommodating, and I felt nothing but warmth from the communities we have visited. The food is fantastic, and, by American standards, incredibly inexpensive. Lodging has been equally amazing. Skeptical? Here's where we're staying tonight!

Casa Barlovento



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I understand that Colombia has a bit of a checkered past, but the country has really stabilized in the last decade. The Colombian half of our contingency is simply wonderful. I had a particularly nice time talking about Boston with one woman who studied policy at Harvard for 2 years. What preconceptions many might have about the country are exactly that, preconceptions. Yes, there are goats running around in the streets in the rural areas, but that's how much of the world lives outside of the bubble that is the US of A. Traveling here in Colombia has proven no different than in Costa Rica as far as I am concerned. Colombia still lags well behind Costa Rica in developing a full-fledged ecotourism program, but with 1,900 bird species in the country, there is a heck of a lot of potential! I'll be spending 3 more days up here on the Caribbean Slope before heading down to the southern end of the country for 3 days in Cali. I'll have more bird-related programming at some point, but for a first pass I really wanted to give folks a ground's-eye view of what things look like.

Our group with local guides
(yellow shirt, back, and red shirt, front)



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Kids being, well....kids. Its the same the world over.
The colors in Colombia are simply beautiful.



The universal symbol for "I'm cool"....



Suffice it to say we've seen orioles, hummingbirds, antshrikes, antwrens, saltators, tanagers, parrots, spinetails, tody-flycatchers, puffbirds, and a host of other typically tropical families. The opportunities really are endless! There will be lots of birds at some point, so please stay tuned!

Posted by [Dorian Anderson](#) at 8:38 PM

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